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the *fifingi* which acts in this fashion, although one may loosely use this term; for in the cases just described the shadow soul turns into something else—a *farú*, a ghost or spirit.

As I have already suggested, the *kuci* corresponds to something like a 'personal soul'. But this is an obscure conception, and all informants will at some stage of the discussion plead ignorance or the presence of a final mystery. The Nupe believe in reincarnation, the souls of the dead being re-embodied in their offspring; it is these transmuted souls which are called *kuci*. One does not in this connection think of distant and perhaps unknown ancestors, but of great-grandparents or even grandparents reborn in their children's children. The rebirth can occur in either line of descent, which fits well into the Nupe kinship system with its strong emphasis on bilateral descent. Whether the ancestors are paternal or maternal, as they are reborn, so their personal qualities, of character (good or bad) as well as physical likeness, reappear. The body, *nakã*, is thus partly shaped by the ancestral soul or *kuci*, which is said to 'enter' it much as a fluid or substance enters a vessel (while the *rayi* does not 'enter' the body but merely gives life to it).

The *kuci* appears in the act of birth, that is, it 'enters' a body already possessing life, and the new-born is in fact called 'a *kuci*', unnamed. For a time body, life soul, and *kuci* are not yet firmly united. Body and life soul merge fully when the umbilical cord is cut; but the *kuci* will not be in full harmony with the other two until it has been identified by divination and the infant's name (which is the name of the reincarnated ancestor) has been pronounced for the first time. The crying of the babe, too, will cease at that moment, since it is only a sign that the new-born senses the initial disharmony. In other words, the three components of the living being become reconciled when the link between human vessel and ancestral soul is acknowledged socially, that is, by the symbol of a name. Only then does the *kuci* lose its other-worldly nature and become fully of this world; while the infant is from then on a person, and not only a breathing body. Henceforth it will be called *egi*, child, and no longer *kuci*, disembodied soul or spirit. The *kuci* therefore adds to the *anima* or life soul a 'personal soul', which is also the carrier of heredity and of kinship continuity.

It is difficult to say just how personal this soul concept is. It is certainly specifically human; for animals have no *kuci*, as they have no names or kin groups. Yet the relationship between the ancestral *kuci* and its reincarnation is not of a one-to-one kind. The same ancestral soul may animate numerous progeny, all living at the same time; indeed, it is said that there 'is no limit' to the number of simultaneous incarnations of the same *kuci*. Here,

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then, the *kuci* appears as an impersonal principle of descent and heredity, even as something like a biological strain mystically interpreted. It is consistent with this latter conception that the *kuci* should be held to be sexless, so that the soul of either grandparent may appear in offspring of either sex. This theory, however, is belied in practice; for I have found few personal names that can be given both to males and females; rather are male and female names sharply distinguished, which would presuppose the opposed assumption of a sex-linked reincarnation. And once, when I was present during the divination of the *kuci* of a new-born child and commented on the likely identity of the *ndakó* (grandfather) in question, the diviner corrected me, pointing out that the child was a girl and that her soul would therefore come from a *nnakó* (grandmother).

The two conceptions, of a 'personal' and of a 'kinship soul', conflict, above all, in the beliefs concerning their fate after death. At death, the *kuci* is said to leave the body and to return to God, if only temporarily, until it finds a new incarnation. Yet it is also said to stay on earth, watching over its kinsfolk in the manner of a guardian spirit and ready to come to their aid in various ways. The *kuci*, incidentally, does so indirectly, having no power of its own, but acting in some fashion through *Sokó*. To enlist the aid of the *kuci*, one performs special sacrifices (*labá*) in the house or on the grave of this or that ancestor. Now, such a belief in the souls or spirits of the dead which, while not at the time incarnated, interest themselves in their surviving kin, would seem to reconcile satisfactorily the two conceptions of a personal soul and one bound to lines of descent. But Nupe belief failed to work out a consistent solution on these lines. Thus the ancestral sacrifices are performed both on the grave of the grandfather most recently dead (and hence hardly yet reincarnated) and on the grave of the most remote known ancestor (who will surely have found a new body). And if, in the latter case, one knows of one outstanding person among the ancestors, the sacrifice will be addressed to him. On the other hand, one need not sacrifice to any particular, named ancestor at all; often, the people address an anonymous *kuci*, that is, the souls of the dead in a generic sense. This is done invariably, in an informal fashion, whenever one drinks beer; then a small libation is poured on the ground, for a *kuci* no further defined.

There is no orthodox answer to the question how the *kuci* can be 'with God' and on earth at the same time, or how it can influence God when it has already entered upon another incarnation. When pursuing this point I received these diverse replies. A first informant made the revolutionary suggestion that there might be two *Sokó*, one in the sky, the other on earth; needless to say, this

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notion was rejected by everybody else. A second view was more widely held, namely, that the *kuci* remains on earth but is watched by God, so that your appeal to the *kuci* will yet reach God; the *kuci*, then, would be 'with God' only in a metaphorical sense. A third informant argued as follows, with somewhat dubious logic: Since you cannot see either God or *kuci*, it follows that they are together. Finally, there was the unprofitable but incontrovertible reply, that here we have a mystery of which 'man is ignorant'.

If the Nupe failed to work out a clear and consistent conception of this survival of 'personal souls', they equally failed to exploit its potentialities. The belief in souls of the dead which remain concerned with the fate of their living kin and are reincarnated in progeny would seem to lend itself ideally to an ethical interpretation. Yet there is no trace of this. There is no conception of the *kuci* being angered by the sins or offences of the living, perhaps refusing its aid or sending punishment. In appealing to the *kuci* the suppliant expects help, not rewards, and help untempered with justice; the help may not come; but this only means that the circumstances were unfavourable or the difficulties too great. Nor is the fate of the soul after death affected by the deeds or character of the living person. It is the same for good men and evil, and the idea that the two might fare differently in the beyond is simply not understood. 'When a person dies, we no longer see him', is all the Nupe find to say on this topic. Which is another facet of that ethical indifference we noted before.

The *kuci* is invariably invoked in the ceremonials surrounding the crucial events of kinship life—birth, marriage, death. Apart from this, *kuci* worship has no special domain, nor is it subject to any regular routine. The sacrifices to ancestors represent casual appeals, performed *ad hoc*, for a variety of reasons, and nearly always on the advice of diviners. Of ten informants one had performed the sacrifice three times in the last four years, because of his ill-health; one had sacrificed twice, first because his horse was sick, and then because his child had smallpox; six informants had sacrificed once during that period—three because of illness, two because of a drought, and one for no particular reason and without consulting a diviner. One informant had performed no *kuci* sacrifice for seven years, and another had sacrificed regularly every year; but he was a village chief, and in his case the sacrifice, addressed to the ancestor who was also the founder of the village, had merged with a *kuti* 'belonging' to the community.

This fusion of *kuci* worship with another type of observance is not an isolated case. As we shall see, it is also entailed in the possession of certain 'great', hereditary medicines, which similarly

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on the list to another, while the list as a whole remains unchanged. Sometimes, however, the lists themselves differ; though these differences are few, they bear relevantly on the social background of the diviner and the interests current in his setting. Thus the diviners in the villages interpret shell pattern 3 as meaning, on occasion, a 'good hunt', which interpretation does not occur at all in the list of the diviners in or near Bida town, where there is no hunting. Again, in the villages shell pattern 8 is sometimes taken to mean 'a council in the house of the chief'; the connection with the 'important people' mentioned in our version is clear; but in that version, coming as it does from the capital where there are no councils of elders or chiefs, the reference to a 'council in the house of the chief' would clearly be out of place. Conversely, shell pattern 1 reversed has in Bida a meaning which hardly affects the life in villages remote from the political difficulties and tensions of the capital; characteristically, in the villages the same pattern reads 'rain will fall', a prophecy which in turn has less importance for the townspeople. In one instance at least—the transposed pattern 2 in 'house' 1—the diviner's key allows for both these interests. I need not point out especially that it allows also for modern conditions and problems of a thoroughly topical kind.

Let me finally quote two examples of complete divinations. The first was performed for a canoe-man who was about to set out on a trip up the river. The cords fell as follows:

Cords	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Shell patterns	6	2 rev.	4	7	3	4	2 rev.	1
Prophecies	The people will foregather	Refers to evening	A pleasant trip	Good trading	The women will pick quarrels	The men will be pleasant	Gifts for the chief	The *huti* is friendly

The advice to the client was to be of good cheer: he should start out in the evening, take along gifts for the chief, and be careful in his dealings with women; he would return, after a successful trip, in four or five days (which last prophecy was nowhere indicated in the cords). The second divination was concerned with identifying the *kuci* of a boy just born to the client (a man). Here the diviner was interested only in the first two 'houses', the first referring to 'God', the second to 'House', that is, to the client's position of a family head. After several throws the diviner obtained this combination:

Cords	1	2
Shell patterns	4	6

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whereupon he announced: 'The grandfather who begot your father—his name is that of the child.' The diviner would not explain his reasoning more precisely beyond saying that pattern 4 in 'house' 1, meaning 'many deaths', must relate to a *kuci* five 'deaths', i.e. generations, removed, while pattern 2 in 'house' 6 indicated the male sex of the *kuci*. Since the Nupe usually regard a great-grandfather as the most remote ancestor likely to be reincarnated, the diviner's reference to an additional generation would seem to be a plausible interpretation of a throw meaning 'many deaths'.

4. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The names of the 'houses' and the meanings attached to the various throws, even in the simple key series, clearly illustrate the close connection between divination and social life. Among the names and meanings we find represented, not only the universal problems of men and communities (death, birth, rain, illness) or particular religious notions (*Sokó*, *kuti*, performance of sacrifices), but also the mundane interests typical of Nupe society. Events on the high roads and travel and trade; the ever-present social issue of 'greatness', that is, of success in the struggle for rank and status; and the equally ubiquitous interest in matters politic, chieftainship, councils of elders, the actions of the ruling class—all these have their place in the scheme of divining and partly even in its basic vocabulary. Similarly, each relevant social grouping is explicitly referred to: the 'house', that is, the large extended family under a family head (*emi*); the 'town' or village (*ežì*); the 'whole country', that is, the kingdom of Nupe; and the class of the 'great men' and nobility. As we have seen, the diverse social settings of the capital and of the villages are reflected in certain variants in the rules of divination. These affect the individual case as well; for a diviner would interpret the prophecies referring to 'gifts' or 'greatness' differently when dealing with a *talaka* (a commoner or peasant) than when dealing with a member of the aristocracy. In the former case 'gifts' mean bowls of food and 'greatness' the favours of a nobleman; in the latter case the gifts turn into more valuable presents, and 'greatness' bears on promotion in rank and title. We have seen, too, that the rules of divination are far from static, having been successfully adapted even to recent conditions and to political problems only some forty years old. We can even point to a typical, transitional phase in this process; for the choice mentioned before, of interpreting the same throw as meaning either 'rain' or 'friendly relations with the White Man', means nothing else.

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ledge' a miscellany of incongruous items. Often the 'books' they get hold of are merely odd assortments of bits of literature, the same volume perhaps containing an extract on marriage law, a page or two on astrology, a treatise on the human body, and a fragment of some Hausa chronicle. Nor does the specific knowledge of Moslem theology fare any better. Again it is a medley of incongruous bits of information and in no way approaches the orthodox teaching of Islam.

The further down you pass in the scale of Nupe Mohammedan scholarship, the more confused and fragmentary becomes this knowledge. Take this summary account of creation and the powers of God which was given to me by one of the 'simple' mallams: 'Mohammed was the first man on earth; the devil (*Sheitan*) sends illness and misfortunes; after death, the good people become kindly spirits (*aljénu*), while evil persons are turned into dust'. Which last statement was the only reference to the ethical sanctions of Islam I encountered in Nupe; for hell or heaven or the last judgment are never mentioned. The notion, incidentally, that Mohammed was the first man is widespread; but otherwise the ideas about creation and the universe are far from uniform. Here is a different and fuller account, recorded from another mallam of this class: Formerly, when all the people lived together in the same place, there existed 'little gods' (*sokó tetengi*), whom God (*Allah*) sent down to earth to take away the souls (*rayi*) of the persons whose life was nearing its end. But the people grew frightened at this mysterious and unannounced demise and tried to evade it by scattering over the earth. So God introduced a new kind of death, heralded by illness, or overcoming man suddenly, through lightning or other natural disasters. These 'little gods' are the *malaika* (the Arabic *mal'ak*, 'angels'). In addition to the messengers of death there exist also *malaika* who bring rain, cause the crops to grow, and watch over man; the chief one amongst them is Jibelelu (Gabriel); others are Mikailu, Ismailu, Ibrahimu, though my informant did not pretend to know them all.

The knowledge possessed by the 'true' mallam is hardly less unorthodox, even though it is fuller and more ambitious. The following text was dictated to me by a gifted pupil of the most famous mallam of Bida and fully conformed to the master's teaching.

'In the beginning there were Adama and Mother Adā. They had three daughters, Mureamu [Miriam, Mary], Fatima [daughter of Mohammed], and Barkisa [Bilkis, the Queen of Sheba], and numerous sons. These were all prophets. God then divided the world into pagans and Moslems. The greatest king of the pagans

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634 the Isaji, who are now distributed over the Pateji Division of Ilorin Province, Kontagora Province, and the Bida Emirate, having been dispersed at the beginning of the nineteenth century from G'bara (now Jimunli); and the Gwagbaji who fled from Jengi near Rabba, north to Kontagora Province on the Filane aggression. They are now to be found in the Zuguma District, in Yelwa north-west of N'Gaski, and in the Bussa District below Wawa. They are described as a very dark race, good looking and well built.

[304] The tribal marks consist of a scar on one cheek, stretching from the nose to the corner of the mouth. Some people, in addition, wear three small cuts at each corner of the mouth, and three small cuts on the chin. They practise circumcision.

The Nupe of Duchu, a town south of the Kaduna river, on the western angle of the Bako and Niger rivers, are talakawa to the Nupe. They are pagans and hold the "echu" snake [771] (probably a python) as sacred. This snake is said to emerge from the bush whenever it is wanted, which is always on the birth of a child, for a mother may not suckle her infant until the "echu" has touched her breasts.

The Ebe are settled in the Yelwa District of Kontagora, but are now almost extinct. They speak Haussa, as well as [304] a dialect of Nupe. They practise circumcision. Their tribal mark is a scar on each cheek from the nose to the corner of the mouth.

Etsu is the name given to a group of Gboda, Kupari, and Gbangiri from Kukuruku (Kabba Province), and Yoruba, who settled in the Sapke District and built the town of Etsu, becoming naturalised Nupe.

634 "Kuso" is the Nupe word for a kola plantation and
771 "Kusopa" means "the man who guards the kola trees."
775 They live in the Labohzi District, an area celebrated for its
[345] kola trees, and a place where palm-oil flourishes, in the south-west of the province. They are pagans. They believe that each individual lives four times, in different existences of which this is the second. They believe that this life is an improvement on the last, where all people were very big and thickly made. In the next life they believe that people will be very tall, but thin, and in the fourth and last life that they will be tiny people, only one or two feet in height. This fourth phase comes at the end of the world when everybody has died, and it is regarded as a heaven, but it is not permanent, being followed by extinction. It is only the good people who can attain to it, as the wicked become bush-beasts. It is not clear whether they believe that the soul is immediately translated to the succeeding sphere or not, but they appear to think that a period of death comes between each phase.

[i.e. Of the Bini subtribe.- Analyst]